Bell Wants Data On Money Trail In King Murder

Post 4/25/77

Attorney General Griffin B. Bell said yesterday that the Justice Department's review of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. murder case has not answered all his questions about the 1968 slaying of the civil rights leader.

At a breakfast meeting with reporters, Bell was asked about the findings of the department task force that reviewed the case. Its report was made public last Friday.

The task force concluded that the FBI had investigated the murder thoroughly and said there were virtually no grounds for doubting that James Earl Ray, now serving a 99-year sentence, was the sole assassin.

However, Bell said yesterday "Id like to find out how Ray got his money." Although Ray traveled extensively and spent money freely in the year between his escape from a Missouri prison and the shooting of King in Memphis, the source of his funds has remained a mystery.

The task force recounted speculation that Ray might have earned money through drug dealings while in prison or by committing burglaries after his escape. However, it found no evidence to substantiate this speculation.

"I don't think we're going to find out unless we talk to Ray," Bell said. Ray refused the task force's attempt to interview him, and a spokesman for Bell said there are no plans to make another request for an interview.

Bell said the King case, although not officially closed, is being put "in abeyance" pending the outcome of a House committee s investigation of the assassination.